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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 55th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 14 November 1996, at 5 p.m.

President: Mr. GERVAIS (Côte d'Ivoire)

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The meeting was called to order at 5.15 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (continued)

Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (E/1996/94)

The PRESIDENT drew the Council's attention to the letters addressed to the Secretary-General by Australia and Spain and contained in document E/1996/94 applying for full membership in the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods. He noted that the Secretary-General had approved the applications and suggested that the Council endorse that decision.

It was so decided.

COORDINATION QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) REPORTS OF THE COORDINATION BODIES (continued) (E/1996/18 and Add.1 and A/51/16 (Part II))

PROGRAMME AND RELATED QUESTIONS IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS (continued) (A/51/16 (Part II))

The PRESIDENT, referring to documents E/1996/18 and Add.1 and the relevant parts of document A/51/16 (Part II), invited the Council to take note of the reports.

It was so decided.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (continued) (E/1996/102 and E/1996/L.55)

Report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (E/1996/102)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council members to consider the three draft decisions contained in document E/1996/102, which the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations recommended for adoption by the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. KOVANDA (Czech Republic), Vice-President, said that, after extensive informal consultations, the following agreements had been reached. With regard to draft decision I, the organization National Society for Human Rights should be deleted from the list of 87 non-governmental organizations, and an additional agreed text concerning that organization, which had been distributed to the members of the Council, should be included in the decision.

With regard to draft decision II, the Committee recommended its adoption without any change. The text of draft decision III had been changed to read as follows:

"The Economic and Social Council affirms that the documentation of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations should be issued in all six official languages of the Council, and requests the Secretariat to prepare for the Council at its organizational session for 1997 an assessment of ways to implement this decision within existing resources."

The Secretariat had indicated that, before draft decision III could be adopted, its programme budget implications must be determined; the Secretariat therefore suggested that the members of the Council should take no steps in relation to draft decision III until the next Council session.

Draft decision I: Applications for consultative status received from non-governmental organizations

Mr. USUI (Japan), referring to the National Rifle Association of America/Institute for Legislative Action, which was on the list contained in draft decision I, expressed special interest in participating in the debates on arms control on the basis of the resolution adopted by the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders. In general, Japan welcomed the participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies and felt that the aforementioned organization would make useful contributions to the debate on arms control and to the work of the United Nations on that topic, in accordance with paragraph 3 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31. With that understanding, Japan had no objections to the adoption of draft decision I.

Mr. BEN AMOR (Tunisia) said that, since draft decision III did not have to be adopted at the present session, he had some doubts as to whether it was wise to adopt the other draft decisions and felt it would perhaps be better to postpone the consideration of the report contained in document E/1996/102 so that it could be adopted as a whole later on.

Ms. KELLEY (Secretary of the Committee) said that the adoption of two of the three draft decisions would not pose any problem, since the document did not contain a general decision but rather three independent draft decisions, and there were many precedents for that practice.

Ms. LEBL (United States of America) said that her delegation joined the consensus but wished to state that, although the United States strongly

supported the role of non-governmental organizations in the United Nations system, it felt that the organization known as Movimiento Cubano por la Paz y la Soberanía de los Pueblos, which the Committee had recommended for consultative status, category II, did not meet the requirements for such status. Her delegation questioned whether the organization could express any views that were different from those of the Government of Cuba and pointed out that it depended almost exclusively on official financing, which meant it did not meet the requirements established in Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

Mr. REYES RODRÍGUEZ (Observer for Cuba) said it seemed to him that arguments were being repeated which had been definitively refuted on technical grounds in the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, and that an attempt was being made to politicize decisions that were basically directed towards achieving cooperation and support from non-governmental organizations recognized as having consultative status by the Economic and Social Council. He noted that the previous year the United States delegation had imposed on the Council a vote concerning an organization which the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations had recommended should not be granted consultative status. Cuba did not accept statements from other countries on its legal system and domestic political activities, or on its civil society. As the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations had recognized in a very clear majority vote, the organization in question met all the requirements to be granted consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

Draft decision I, as orally amended, was adopted.

Mr. BIGGAR (Ireland) said that the draft decision just adopted by the Council had excluded the application for consultative status of an organization whose consideration had been postponed. In that regard, his delegation felt it was important to point out that the case of that organization was an exceptional one, and that the decision adopted should not be considered a precedent.

Draft decision II: Implementation of Economic and Social Council decision 1996/302

Mr. USUI (Japan) said that a correction should be made to the list of non-governmental organizations contained in draft decision II with regard to the Japanese organization Sasakawa Peace Foundation, whose correct name was Sasagawa Peace Foundation.

Ms. LEBL (United States of America) repeated her previous remarks, applying them to the Cuban organization Centro de Estudios Sobre Asia y Oceanía. The purpose of establishing consultative relations between the Council and non-governmental organizations was to allow the former to benefit from the opportunity to hear different points of view. Regrettably, the decision of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations to recommend that consultative status be granted to organizations sponsored by Governments undermined the integrity and usefulness of the relations between such organizations and the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. PEDROSO CUESTA (Observer for Cuba) said he rejected such insistence on questioning the legal validity of certain non-governmental organizations. The technical arguments put forward to uphold the legal status of Cuban non-governmental organizations, whose applications had already been considered and approved in the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, were irrefutable, and no delegation could arrogate to itself the right to impugn their validity.

Draft decision II was adopted.

Ms. KELLEY (Secretary of the Committee) said that the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea wished to make a statement but that, as it was not a member of the Council, it could not do so in relation to the voting, although it could make a general statement provided that the Council members did not object.

Mr. RI TONG IL (Observer for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the decision of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations to reject the application from the organization "Centre for the Advancement of North Korean Human Rights" was a good one. The very name of the South Korean non-governmental organization was a provocation. His delegation felt that if such entities were granted consultative status with the Council, the United Nations would become a forum for controversies and confrontations between States, thereby undermining the spirit of the Organization. When the Council considered granting non-governmental organizations consultative status, it should take into account, above all, whether such recognition would really serve the interests of the Organization.

Draft decision III: Documentation of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

The PRESIDENT suggested that the Council should postpone its consideration of draft decision III until its next session.

It was so decided.

Draft decision E/1996/55: Participation of non-governmental organizations accredited to the Fourth World Conference on Women in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-first session (E/1996/55)

Ms. BRENNEN-HAYLOCK (Observer for the Bahamas) introduced the draft resolution contained in document E/1996/L.55 and said that, after wide consultations, a new, revised text had been distributed and also orally amended. After its revision and modification, the following text had been approved by consensus:

"The Economic and Social Council decides (a) to invite, as an interim measure, in conformity with the provisions of paragraph 53 of Council resolution 1996/31, those non-governmental organizations which were accredited to the Fourth World Conference on Women or the World Summit for Social Development and which, no later than one month prior to the respective session, will have started the process of applying for consultative status, to attend only the forty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the thirty-fifth session of the Commission for Social Development respectively, and (b) to request the Secretary-General to draw the attention of the non-governmental organizations accredited to the World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development to the provisions of the present decision and to the process established under Council resolution 1996/31."

Mr. STOBY (Director of the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs) said that the draft decision under consideration did not stipulate the category under which the organizations would be recognized, and therefore, for the purposes of implementation, the Secretariat would assume that it was the same category as stipulated in a similar decision adopted by the Council in 1996, which indicated that the organizations in question would not be accredited but would be invited to participate and would therefore enjoy the practical rights of accreditation.

Draft decision E/1996/L.55, as orally revised, was adopted.

OTHER MATTERS

The PRESIDENT drew attention to the fact that the Council, at its 53rd meeting, held on 10 October, had adopted a draft decision (E/1996/102/Add.1/Corr.1) on applications from organizations of indigenous people not in consultative status with the Council to participate in the open-ended inter-sessional Working Group of the Commission on Human Rights to elaborate a draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. That Council decision, inter alia, approved the participation of the non-governmental organization L'auravetl'an Foundation (Liechtenstein) on a provisional basis, pending the receipt of the views of the Government concerned. Since the delegation of Liechtenstein had indicated its desire that the organization's provisional status should be removed, the members of the Council were invited to adopt the Government of Liechtenstein's recommendation that the organization should be considered as fully accredited.

It was so decided.

Change of dates for the 1997 session of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

The PRESIDENT invited the Council members to consider the request of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations to hold its 1997 session from 5 to 16 May 1997 and not from 31 March to 11 April as originally scheduled. The request was being made because the originally scheduled dates coincided with the Commission on Human Rights session to be held in Geneva from 10 March to 18 April, which many members of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations usually attended. Moreover, the Secretariat had indicated that the new dates would not present any problems for conference services. He therefore invited the Council members to approve the Committee's request.

It was so decided.

Mr. BEN AMOR (Tunisia), referring to the addendum to the report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (E/1996/103/Add.1), and speaking on behalf of the delegation of Thailand, said that Thailand had been omitted from the list of representatives that had made statements at that session of the Committee, and he asked for a correction of the error.

ELECTIONS (continued) (E/1996/95 and Corr.1 and E/1996/15/Add.2)

Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development (E/1996/L.15/Add.2)

The PRESIDENT drew attention to document E/1996/L.15/Add.2, on the nomination of Mr. José María Gamio Cia to serve on the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development, noting that it had been impossible to hold the election during the substantive session of the Council because the candidate's curriculum vitae had been unavailable. He took it that the Council members, after considering the relevant information, wished to elect by acclamation Mr. José María Gamio Cia.

Mr. José María Gamio Cia (Uruguay) was elected by acclamation to serve on the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development.

Mr. NEBENZA (Russian Federation) said that the Russian Federation had submitted its nominations for the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development, which had been approved by the Group of Central and Eastern European States; however, for reasons beyond the control of those delegations, the relevant document could not be prepared on time, and he therefore requested that the document should be considered at a later meeting.

Commission for Social Development (E/1996/95/Corr.1)

The PRESIDENT reminded the Council members that, pursuant to Council decision 1996/298, the mandates of the members of the Commission for Social Development would be determined by lot when the membership of the Committee was complete, and he drew attention to document E/1996/95/Corr.1, on enlargement of the membership of the Commission for Social Development and the election of 14 members.

Ms. KELLEY (Secretary of the Committee) said that the Group of African States had four vacancies to fill and had nominated four candidates, Cameroon, Gambia, Mauritania and Uganda; the Group of Asian States had four vacancies to fill and had nominated one candidate, Pakistan; the Group of Eastern European States had one vacancy to fill, and had nominated no candidates; the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States had three vacancies to fill and had nominated no candidates; and the Group of Western European and other States had two vacancies to fill and had nominated two candidates, Malta and Spain.

The PRESIDENT said that, since the number of candidates nominated by the Group of African States, the Group of Asian States and the Group of Western European and other States was equal to or less than the number of vacancies to be filled, he would take it that the Council wished to elect the candidates nominated by those groups by acclamation.

Cameroon, Gambia, Malta, Mauritania, Pakistan, Spain and Uganda were elected by acclamation to serve on the Commission for Social Development.

The PRESIDENT took it that the Council wished to postpone the election of the seven remaining members of the Commission, namely, three members of the Group of Asian States, one member of the Group of Eastern European States and three members from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.